(b) No, Sir. However, during the third meeting of the SAFTA Committee of Experts (COE) held on 1-2 March 2008 in New Delhi, all member countries of SAFTA have agreed in principle to prune their Sensitive Lists.

(c) During the Composite dialogue both India and Pakistan agreed to explore the possibility of opening the second gate at Attari for movement of Bilateral trade.

(d) and (e) Pakistan's positive list policy is in violation of the spirit of SAFTA and contrary to the provisions of the Agreement. India has been protesting against Pakistan's conditional implementation amounting to non-cimpliance of SAFTA in relevant fora.

Crops damages due to rains in Tamil Nadu

*352. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that incessant rains claimed many lives and caused an extensive, damage to standing crops in Tamil Nadu recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of acres of crops including paddy, cotton and other crops damaged due to rains; and

(c) the details of the assistance provided by the Centre to the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI RADHIKA V. SELVI): (a) to (c) According to the memorandum sent by the Government of Tamil Nadu, heavy rains resulted in the loss of 24 human lives and caused extensive damage to 3.91 lakh ha. of standing crops including paddy (0.44 lakh ha), pulses & grams (2.81 lakh ha), horticulture (0.27 lakh ha) and other crops (0.39 lakh ha.).

2. The State Governments are primarily responsible for undertaking relief measures in the wake of natural calamities. The Government of India supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing logistic and financial support. Financial assistance in the wake of natural calamities is provided to States through the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF), allocation for which is made to various States based on the recommendations of the successive Finance Commissions. CRF is supplemented by the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) in cases of calamities of a severe nature after following the laid down procedure.

3. To ensure ready availability of funds with the States to undertake rescue and relief operations in the wake of natural calamities, a Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) has been constituted for each State, which is contributed by Government of India and the State Governments in the ratio of 75:25. Under the scheme of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) State Level Committee has been authorized to operate CRF in accordance with the items and norms of assistance approved by the Government of India.

4. The State of Tamil Nadu has been allocated an amount of Rs. 230.51 crore in Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for the year 2007-08 consisting of Rs. 172.88 crore as Central contribution and Rs. 57.63 crore as State contribution. Both the instalments of Central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 86.44 crore each have been released to the State Government on 11th September 2007 and 19th February 2008 respectively.

5. In addition, the Government of India has released in advance, the first instalment of central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 90.76 crore for the year 2008-09 on 10th April 2008.

6. The Government of Tamil Nadu has submitted a memorandum seeking Central assistance from NCCF for relief operations in the areas affected by heavy rains during March 2008. Upon receipt of the memorandum, an Inter-Ministerial Central Team was constituted, which visited the State during 5-9 April 2008, for making an on the spot assessment of damage and requirement of funds. Further action will be taken on receipt of report of the Central Team, as per laid down procedure for release of Central assistance from NCCF.

Destruction of crops due to heavy rains in States

♦353. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether large scale destruction of crops due to heavy rains has been reported recently from various States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has taken steps to ascertain the loss due to the calamity;

(d) if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and

(e) the details of the measures taken and relief/assistance sanctioned to the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRIMATl RADHIKA V. SELVI): (a) to (e) The following States/UT Administration, based on their preliminary assessment, have reported damage to crops due to heavy rains/hailstorm States during March and April, 2008:—

Sl.No.	State/UT	Cropped area affected (in lakh ha.)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1.28
2.	Karnataka	2.28
3.	Kerala	0.08
4.	Tamil Nadu	3.91
5.	Punjab	Being assessed
6.	Puducherry	70.16

2. The States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have submitted memoranda seeking Central assistance from NCCF for relief operations in the areas affected by heavy rains/hailstorm during March, 2008. Inter-Ministerial Central Teams have been constituted immediately in respect of the States of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Teams have already visited these States for making on the spot assessment of damage and requirement of funds. Further action will be taken on receipt of reports of the Central Teams as per laid down procedure for release of Central assistance from NCCF. The memorandum from the State of Andhra Pradesh and details from the UT of Puducherry have recently been received and Inter Ministerial Central Teams are being constituted to visit this State and UT. Memorandum from the Government of Punjab is awaited.

3. The State Governments are primarily responsible for undertaking relief measures in the wake of natural calamities. The Government of lndia supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing logistic and financial support. Financial assistance in the